The Ottawa Citizen

An independent newspaper, founded in 1844

R. W. Southam Publisher

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Published by the proprietor, Southam Press Limited at 136 Sparks Street, Ottawa 4, Ontario

Wednesday, Dec. 24, 1969

AT CHRISTMAS

Tis the season to be thankful

For most Canadians, Christmas is a merry and comfortable experience.

Whatever the chill factor outside, the livingroom can be quite cosy — with the Christmas tree and the presents, greeting cards from loved ones and friends, and children joining in carols.

It is a time to escape the monotony of daily existence — the unpaid bills, peeling paint, minor ailments, physical and otherwise, which are a reminder that life is not, and was never meant to be, without severe tests.

Human restlessness being what it is, we tend to spot the dismal side more clearly than the bright one.

We harp on what we lack, ignoring what we have. We fret about the tensions of our technological society, oblivious to the blessings it has produced.

Nor should we forget — that, though society is affluent, there is poverty in our midst. That though we enjoy the rule of law, festering injustices cr / out to be cured. That though we live in a relatively calm country, there is turbulence and storm in the world outside. That though technology has solved some age-old problems, it has manufactured new ones which threaten our future.

But let's maintain perspective. While being rightly concerned with existing and future problems, let's be grateful for what we have - life itself, a free and healthy society, and the power to shape our and the human family's future with justice, compassion, and wisdom.

Indians find a friend

Nothing quite so heartening to the prospects of Canada's Indian people has occurred in recent months as the announcement that Basil Robinson is to take over as deputy minister of Indian affairs and northern development.

A man of compassion, wisdom and sensitivity will occupy that office as the government prepares to return to the conference table with the Indians to negotiate their future. If his presence can dominate the vast bureaucracy he will stand astride, there is a basis for hope.

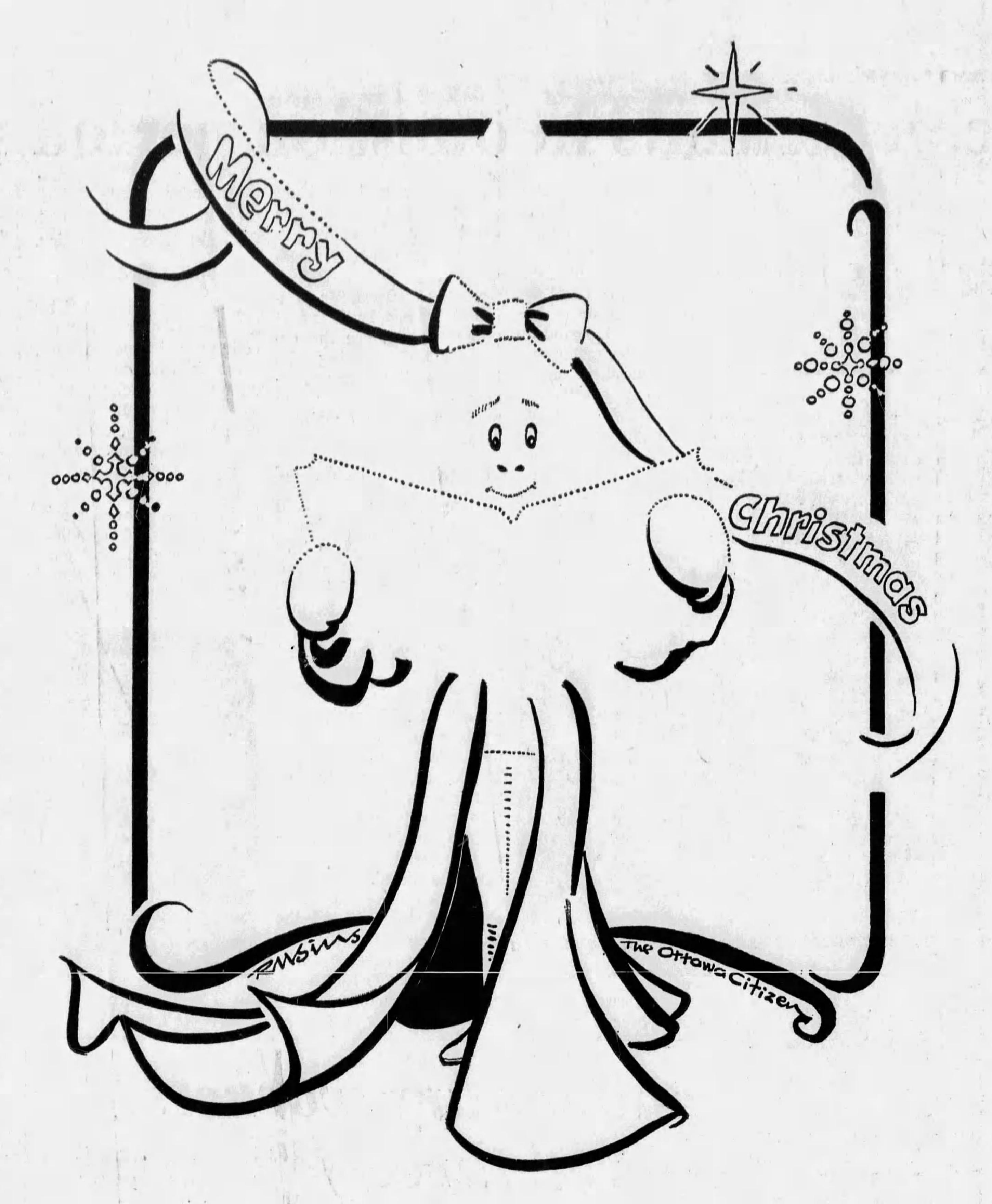
The former deputy undersecretary of external affairs will have his work cut out for him. As with Indian affairs, the government's policy in the North has been strong on the development side but weak on humanity. The people of the North are restless, wanting — and deserving — more of a say in their future.

The present deputy, John MacDonald, moves over to the public works department with his reputation as a driving, hard-headed businessman in-

Give a gift of blood

This year's Christmas blood donor clinic will be held on Friday from 10.30 a.m. to 8.30 p.m. at the RA Centre on Riverside Drive. Last year, 1,134 blood donations were given; this year, 1,200 are needed.

The clinic, sponsored by the Red Cross and Junior Board of Trade, is providing free baby-sitting service at the centre, and free transportation is available by phoning 232-7131. There will likely be amateur entertainment for those waiting, and soft drinks and cookies will be served. It makes for a pleasant party with an important purpose.





CHRISTMAS GIVING

Scrooge had more fun

By Don McGillivray Southam News Services

LONDON-Britain is Christmas country, where the traditional Yuletide festivities seem native and nat-

This is not because any great effort goes into Christmas decorations and public preparations. More than in Canada, Christmas is a time of private parties and family fun.

British cities do not dress themselves up for Christmas as much as Canadian cities. There are fewer colored lights around, fewer spectacular shop window displays, fewer loudspeakers grinding out metallic carols from looped tape.

But the Christmas background is always in place. There are plenty of old inns on gabled village streets where it is no effort to imagine the arrival of a coachload of jolly travellers. It is easy to picture roaring log fires glittering through leaded windows on the freshly fallen snow. And the bells of St. Clement's and all the other nursery rhyme churches still ring out in London streets.

Too much jollity

Critics might find some faults in this old time atmosphere. If this is a white Christmas in Britain, as the weather forecasts have been promising, it will only be the seventh this century, an average of one in 10. Jolly travellers are likely to encounter a police officer who will ask them to blow into a breath tester to check their jollity count. It's hard to hear the bells above the traffic. Such fault-finding apart, the background is a big reason Christmas seems so at home in Britain. The background and buildings of Britain are largely Victorian, and so is Christmas as we know it.

Fun under attack

It is one of the last survivals of the ebullient, confident Victorian age and, as such, it is under attack in our own doubtful, doom-crying

Because we find it hard to imagine that our grandfathers ever had any fun, we've given Victorians a bad name as a gang of repressive bluenoses. A good antidote is to look at a Victorian building, a riot of Greek columns, Roman arches, Gothic towers, and wedding cake icing — the builders obviously thought a bank or an office or a railway station should be fun. Then look at a contemporary building by life-is-real-and-life-is-earnest

The traditional Christmas invented by the Victorians had the same lavish opulence as a Victorian railway station. Dickens personified it with his spirit of Christmas present, a jovial giant sitting on a mountain of goodies. It was a time when people as poor as the Cratchits had a right to a feast and the rich, having given their alms, could sit down to their own groaning tables without any nagging sense of shame.

But guilt grows where Victorian self-confidence once flourished. We take our pleasures sadly. Self-flagellation invades Christmas, even in

The bright lights of Piccadilly Circus are shining this year on youngsters suffering through a 50hour fast, from Christmas Eve to Boxing Day, for Biafra-Nigerian relief. OXFAM, the famine relief agency, is reminding Christmas diners that the price of their pudding would feed a square meal to 50 hungry children in Malawi.

The Victorians invented the Christmas card as a piece of frippery to send to their friends. Now it is the "charity card" sold by half a hundred relief and welfare agencies. With the greeting goes a discreet reminder that the sender at least is a person of conscience.

The causes are worthy but the charity wears a solemn, guilt-ridden face. We can't get the fun out of it that Scrooge got from his giving, whooping and hollering through the streets of London.

Shades of Dickens

Yet in those streets it seems easier to summon up the spirit of Scrooge and of his creator, Charles Dickens, blowing on his fingers to warm them from the damp, bonechilling cold which has descended on Britain in the past week.

"Heap on more wood. The wind is chill; but let it whistle as it will we'll keep our Christmas merry still," Sir Walter Scott might shout. And Tiny Tim — the little lame Cratchit, not the oddball singer who got married in New York the other day - might answer: "God bless us, every one."

READERS' VIEWS

Fun in store for skaters on the canal

Editor, Citizen: I was delighted to read N. D. Routledge's letter (Citizen, Dec. 19) about having a skating party on the canal in front of the National Arts Centre. How right he is.

This letter is just to tell him that the National Arts Centre Orchestra Association has, for the last few weeks, been busy with precisely such a plan and I feel sure that reader Routledge will forgive me if I don't let the cat out of the bag as

All the people whose blessing we need have been contacted, and when it's all in the bag, it will be quite some cat by the time it gets

(Mrs.) TRUDY LeCAINE Ottawa.

Make it a rink

Editor, Citizen: I have just read N. D. Routledge's letter of Dec. 19 entitled, "Have a party." This suggestion is really great and l would like to add another idea along the same lines.

While driving along Colonel By Drive, my wife and I have often thought that if the city officials could turn the Rideau Canal from the Chateau Laurier to Dow's Lake into a skating rink for young and old alike it would be a great addition to Ottawa winter sports activities. The canal could be used all winter for skating parties, hockey games and winter weekend festivities.

Surely a few trips up and down the centre of the canal by a city snowblower wouldn't cost that much in return for the added enjoyment it would bring to thousands of Ottawans.

WAYNE WILSON Ottawa.

Hair unwelcome

Editor, Citizen: On Dec. 20 at 2:45 p.m. I was witness to a minor injustice. A youth was thrown out of the Honey Dew Restaurant on the Mall, after being refused service, for no other reason than the length of his hair.

The police officer who was called in to perform this discriminatory injustice asked no questions, but on request from a waitress threw the lad out without hesitation. This officer even went as far as to state that he needed no reason and, after failing to produce credentials when requested, threatened to throw out numerous other customers if they didn't "mind their own business."

Words of thanks must go to the Honey Dew Restaurant for employing such open-minded citizens, and to the cop in question who, by his blindness and prejudice, makes the jobs of his coworkers a little harder.

Merry Christmas to the Honey Dew and the officer in question.

BOB KILBURN

Ottawa.

Agnostic view

Editor, Citizen: In clerical circles an agnostic is often considered an out-and-out atheist which, of course, is a false accusation. An agnostic does not deny the teaching of the church as to how and when Christianity and its Deity originated, but undisputable proof as to its truth and accuracy has never been forthcoming to his satisfaction.

as to man's origin and his originator's existence is all an agnosite is trying to ascertain, but to publish his doubts is unthinkable in the news media, as are most of my opinions! Furnish this proof and the agnostic will pass away.

H. R. ALLEN

Help war amps

Editor, Citizen: In some countries war amputees and handicapped are given preferential treatment on transit systems. Other countries set aside certain licensed businesses for them (selling lottery tickets, etc.) while at least one has passed a law requiring companies above a certain size to maintain a handicap ratio of 5 per cent of their work force.

When I was a personnel manager I set aside certain types of work for handicapped people, using 4 per cent of the work force as a goal for the plant. I was never sorry because they performed satisfactorily and only one had to be released.

One of the many forward-looking requirements missing in the white paper on taxation is a section giving industry some incentive for hiring handicapped people. If those companies with 4 per cent or more handicapped employees were given a reduction of 1 per cent of their income tax combined with government suasion, a large portion of this problem would be resolved. M. W. JASON

Beatle go home

Editor, Citizen: I note with revulsion that John and Yoko Lennon are once again inflicting their presence on the people of Canada — this time in Toronto where they plan a "drive

for peace." What consummate nerve! I did not notice them being very concerned about peace last year, when during the Tet offensive the Viet Cong massacred almost the entire population of the city of Hue — throwing thousands of bodies into mass graves

and the rest into rivers. I note they chose Canada over all other places in the world, because "Canada's attitude with regard to Vietnam, China and Nato is very sensible."

I suggest that this is just the beginning of a pattern which our government is devising for us, and that within another year or two, when the anti-hate literature bill has become law, strict censorship of all the news media has been enforced, and Mr. Benson's white paper on taxation has made George Orwell's 1984 become a fact ahead of its time, the Lennons may find here in Canada that state of Maoistic bliss — from which only the intelligent flee!

MARJORIE Le LACHEUR

Publicity need

Editor, Citizen: Your newspaper has recently reported on increased taxes, apathy on the part of civic electors, and damage to the Brewer Park swimming pool

In order to create a greater interest in civic affairs, is it not possible to publicize, in advance, the agenda for meetings of city council and The truth beyond doubt the various school boards with appropriate editorial comment as to the possible impact of decisions which may be taken?

> With particular regard to the board of education, it might cause it to act in a less secretive fashion.

W. A. GRIFFITH

The Citizen publishes only signed correspondence. No pseudonyms are permitted. Writers are requested to provide their address and telephone number to facilitate checking for authenticity and accuracy. These details will not be published. All letters are subject to editing for length, general interest and good taste. They should be limited to a maximum of 200 words.

A note to correspondents

CHARLES KING

It wasn't such a bad year after all

Since this will be the last word from this corner in 1969 - a couple of weeks' holiday has been granted for after Christmas - I should begin by wishing both of you faithful readers a merry Yuletide and bright new year.

And say, untruthfully, how much I will miss this place while the King tribe conducts a search for sunshine and warmth

in the land to the south of us. And add a note of caution, for the benefit of any burglars who may trip across these words, that out-of-town friends will be occupying our snowbound homestead during the interval.

With such vital preliminaries out of the way, the next order of business is to mull over what's been going on around here in the last 12 months, and try to draw some conclusions for 1970.

It's been a good year, all

things considered, and an exciting time to be alive.

For all mankind, its highlight was the landing on the moon by American astronauts, in full view of a wide-eyed audience of fellow earthlings tuned in on television.

Touches of tragedy

It had its touches of tragedy - most notably the self-destruction of a political career of high promise by Senator Ted Kennedy, once the great hope of the Democratic party for the presidency in 1972. But many of 1969's achievements were on the positive side.

It brought the departure of the old meddler, President de Gaulle; the death of Ho Chi Minh; the ultimate rejection of an unpopular and unwinnable war by a significant majority of the American people; tentative

steps toward peace and disarmament at international conference tables in Paris and Helsinki; and a steady, if painful, effort to shore up Canadian unity through the belated recognition of our bicultural heritage.

Not all the words on these pages in 1969 were happy ones. But measured against the daily diet of previous years, there was basis for hope that our perilous planet is coming to its senses and concentrating on improving the quality of life for all its inhabitants, black, white, brown and yellow.

At long last, serious efforts are being made to conquer pollution and racial prejudice, two of our most persistent human afflictions. The barriers are coming down, slowly but surely, between East and West in the thawed-out cold war. Health standards are rising, and medical science is making giant

strides in the harnessing of new knowledge for the benefit of man; and the Middle East, though it remains a tinderbox of political intrigue and hate, appears to have got through the year without erupting again in all-out war. A setback for youth

For two old stagers on the Canadian political scene, 1969 brought satisfying personal endorsements of their leadership style: British Columbia's Premier Bennett won a handsome election victory in a hard-fought campaign; Newfoundland's Joey Smallwood successfully organized a convention vote to succeed himself as head of the Liberal party in that province. Both men were beset by youthful challengers, but the two 69year-olds, each wise in experience and political guile, just ran too fast for them.

There was only one political upset across the land. Manitoba's Tories lost power to young Ed Schreyer, who surprised himself by scoring Canada's first provincial victory for the NDP. And while we're at this busi-

ness of summing up the year's events, it should be noted that 1969 saw the advent of the most foolish feminine fashion yet, the maxicoat. It may be warm in this frigid weather, but it will do nothing for the legion of girl-watchers who will have to turn to other pastimes while the fad lasts. Away with you now, 1969.

but I have a heavy date with 1970 coming up, and from here it looks promising indeed.

You've done your work, much

of it good, and very little of it

bad. It's been fun knowing you,

Meantime, Happy Christmas to all, and to all a goodnight.